

Piecing Together the Story of Glenn Cunningham: A Kansas Champion

Overview

This lesson allows the students to work with both primary and secondary sources. Several primary sources are presented that give clues to the life and accomplishments of Kansas runner Glenn Cunningham. This lesson helps the students find clues in the primary sources and then asks the students to tell their own version of the Glenn Cunningham story, which results in the creation of a secondary source. Students are then asked to compare their version of the story to an expository text presented with this lesson. This lesson is presented over a four day time period but can be adapted to meet individual classroom needs.

Standards

History:

Benchmark 4, Indicator 4 The student identifies and compares information from primary and secondary sources (e.g., photographs, diaries/journals, newspapers, historical maps).

Reading:

Benchmark 4, Indicator 3 The student uses prior knowledge and content to make, revise, and confirm predictions.

Benchmark 4, Indicator 5 The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.

Objectives

Content:

- The student explains why Glenn Cunningham can be seen as a hero.

Skills:

- The student describes the difference between a primary source and a secondary source in doing historical research.
- The student identifies facts from primary sources to tell a story.

Essential Questions

- How do we learn about things that happened in the past?
- Why was Glenn Cunningham a special Kansan?



Activities

This activity uses the following *Read Kansas* cards:

- Who Was Glenn Cunningham?
- Hugoton Hermes
- Never Quit
- Glenn Cunningham: Always a Winner
- Glenn Cunningham: A Biography

Day 1

1. Ask the students how we know about things that happened in the past. Narrow the discussion to how people who write about history learn their facts.
2. Write the words *primary source* and *secondary source* on the board. Discuss the definition of each. This would be a good opportunity to use *biographies* and *autobiographies* as examples. (see **For the Teacher** on page 4 for definitions and other examples).
3. Explain to students that historians are like detectives. They look for clues or facts from *primary sources*. Explain that students are going to look for clues in *primary sources* to try to piece together the story of Glenn Cunningham.
4. Give each student a copy of the **Who Was Glenn Cunningham?** *Read Kansas* card. Have them study the historic photograph (a *primary source*) on the front. Discuss what they might learn from the photograph. What are the clues that tell who Glenn Cunningham was? Write these on the board.
5. Have the students turn over the **Who Was Glenn Cunningham?** *Read Kansas* card and look at the information on the back. The historic photograph is a *primary source*. The text is from a radio announcement, which is also a *primary source*. Discuss what they can learn from these *primary sources*. What are the clues? Write these on the board.
6. Give each student a copy of the **Piecing Together the Story of Glenn Cunningham: A Kansas Champion** worksheet. Using the puzzle piece in the upper left hand corner, have the students record the clues written on the board. This worksheet will be used with three other *primary sources* to help us piece together the story of Glenn Cunningham.

Day 2

1. Using the worksheet, review with students what they learned yesterday about Glenn Cunningham.
2. Give each student a copy of the **Hugoton Hermes** *Read Kansas* card. This card represents two newspaper articles. These are *primary sources* that contain clues about Glenn Cunningham's life. The reading level of these articles may be difficult for some students. Read the first article (on the front of the *Read Kansas* card) aloud to the class. Have the students follow along. Have the students read the story silently then ask for volunteers to read the story aloud to the class. Discuss what they have learned from this *primary source*. What are the clues? Write them on the board. Does the article generate any questions? Write those on the board, also.
3. Have the students turn over the **Hugoton Hermes** *Read Kansas* card where they will find a follow-up newspaper article. This is also a *primary source*. Read the article aloud to the students then have them read it aloud with you. Discuss what they have

learned from this *primary source*. What are the clues? Are any questions answered? Write the clues on the board.

4. Using the worksheet, have the students write down what they have learned about Glenn Cunningham in the upper right-hand puzzle piece.

Day 3

1. Using the worksheet, review with the students what they have already learned about Glenn Cunningham.
2. Give each student a copy of the **Never Quit Read Kansas** card. This card is an excerpt from Cunningham's autobiography. This is a *primary source*. The reading level is appropriate for fourth grade. Have the students read the story silently then ask for volunteers to read the story out loud to the class. Discuss what we have learned from this *primary source*. What are the clues? Write them on the board.
3. Using the worksheet, have the students write down what they have learned about Glenn Cunningham in the lower left-hand puzzle piece.
4. Divide the students into small groups. Give each student a copy of the **Glenn Cunningham: Always a Winner Read Kansas** card. Have the students look at the front side of the card. Discuss why this is a *primary source*? Working in their groups, have the students read the letter on the front of the card. What have they learned? What are the clues? Have them record their thoughts on their worksheet in the lower right hand puzzle piece. As a class discuss what they have found.
5. With students still in their groups, have the students examine the back side of their **Glenn Cunningham: Always a Winner Read Kansas** card. What clues do they find? Have them record their thoughts on their worksheet in the lower right hand puzzle piece. As a class discuss what they have found.

Day 4

1. Today the class is going to do what historians do. Using the information gathered from the *primary sources* the class is going to piece together the story of Glenn Cunningham. This can be done orally as a class discussion. If time permits you may want to assign the students a more creative way of telling the story through an individual writing assignment, a Power Point presentation, a dramatic skit, or a graphic novel. Have the students use their notes that are recorded on their worksheets.
2. Explain to the students that the story they write about Glenn Cunningham is called a *secondary source* (see definitions included under **For the Teacher** on page 4). Other authors have written *secondary sources* on Glenn Cunningham.
3. Give each student a copy of the **Glenn Cunningham: A Biography Read Kansas** card. This is a *secondary source*. It is a *biography*, rather than an *autobiography*. A historian at the Kansas State Historical Society wrote it. Have the class read the biography and compare it to their own story of Glenn Cunningham.
4. To wrap up the lesson have the students compare the information in the *primary sources* and the *secondary sources*.

Extended Activity:

- Additional sources you might want to use for this lesson are maps. Using a Kansas map have students locate where Cunningham was born (Augusta, Kansas). Have students locate Elkhart and note where it is in relation to Hugoton. Note in what counties these towns are located. The second newspaper article, "Boy Dies From Burns," mentions that Glenn's brother was buried in Oklahoma. Ask students how far it would be to travel from Elkhart to Oklahoma. The photograph on the **Who Was Glenn Cunningham? Read Kansas** card shows Cunningham wearing a shirt with the

name of the university he attended. Have students identify that university (University of Kansas) and locate it (in Lawrence) on the map to see how far away from home Cunningham was when he went to college. On a world map have students locate the site of the 1936 Olympics based on the primary source information on the **Glenn Cunningham: Always a Winner** *Read Kansas* card. They can also locate the home countries of the other two winners in that race (New Zealand and Italy).

- Ask students to write about something they have done in their lives that required them to overcome some type of obstacle or to write about why it is important to “never quit.”

Assessment

- Evaluate the students’ ability to successfully complete the worksheet.
- Observe the students’ ability to use information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.

For the Teacher

Historians compile information about and narrate the story of the past. They investigate and analyze competing ideas and facts to create coherent narratives that explain what happened and why or how it happened with as much exactness as possible. This involves checking the accuracy of recorded facts against each other in order to provide a more accurate overall story of the past. For example, the story of the fire that killed Glenn Cunningham’s brother was published in the Hugoton newspaper in Stevens County. The Cunningham family lived near Elkhart in Morton County. Historians would want to know how reliable the published account would be since Hugoton is so far away. Further research tells historians that there was no newspaper published at the time in Elkhart, so the Hugoton account might be the only account recorded.

What is a *primary source*?

1. Historians use primary sources to determine what happened in the past.
2. A primary source is a document or an artifact that was created at the time of an event or by a person that was present at the event. Photographs, newspapers, census records, diaries, and autobiographies are all primary sources.
3. Once a historian pieces together the events of the past through primary sources, he or she interprets those materials to tell the story of the past.

What is a *secondary source*?

1. When a historian or someone else writes an interpreted account of the past, that is considered a secondary source.
2. Most expository texts are secondary sources. A biography is a secondary source.

To read more from **Cunningham’s autobiography** see:

Cunningham, Glenn, *Never Quit*, Lincoln, Virginia: Chosen Books Publishing Company, Ltd., 1981, pp. 122-124.

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Resources for this lesson are from:

- Kansas State Historical Society collections
- University of Kansas, Spencer Research Library, University Archives

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